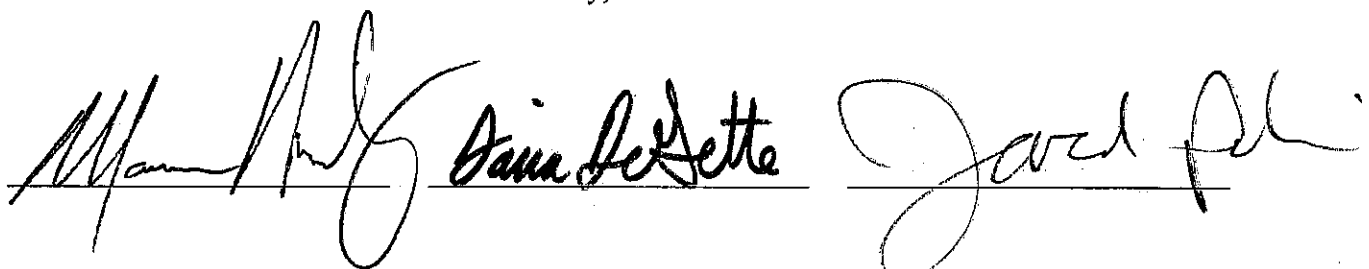
Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 12, 2011

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

Dear Secretary Salazar:

We are writing to express our strong support of your recent announcement of plans to develop a new policy for the public disclosure of chemical compounds used in hydraulic fracturing, also known as fracking, on public lands. This is a critical step forward in encouraging the oil and gas industry to be more transparent and responsibly address the potential implications of hydraulic fracturing on water supplies and public health.

As oil and natural gas development expands across many regions of our country, the use of hydraulic fracturing is growing as well, bringing drilling operations closer and closer to communities and sources of drinking water. This process of developing natural gas by injecting a mixture of chemicals, water, and sand into underground rock formations, has resulted in complaints from neighboring communities that their water supplies have become contaminated. As our nation faces the challenges of reducing the impacts of fossil fuels while transitioning to a cleaner energy future, the Interior Department must be vigilant in ensuring that oil and gas development is done in accordance with safe and environmentally sound standards. Should we fail to do this, we will pay a heavy price.

The public has a right to know what toxins might be going into the ground near their communities, and what might be leaking into their drinking water – they have a right to be well-informed. Requiring transparency in the disclosure of potent toxins used in the fracking process is an important start to what we hope will be broader, comprehensive energy development policies, which will embrace best practices for both traditional and renewable energy development.

We also applaud your assurances that you intend to work with the oil and gas industry, environmentalists and state energy regulators to guide your Department in the development of this new policy. Giving all stakeholders a seat at the table will ensure transparency in the regulation process as well, leading to stronger and more viable disclosure policies.

Thank you again for your efforts to protect the public lands and public health through this undertaking.

Sincerely,

Donna F. Edwards

Barney Frank

Howard L. Berman

Rush Holt

Mazie K. Hirono

Barbara Lee Nita M. Lowey Bob Filner

Bill Owens